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INFO RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000363

SIPDIS

NSC FOR DAN FISK AND MIKE KOZAK
COMMERCE FOR SECRETARY GUTIERREZ
STATE WHA FOR TOM SHANNON, KIRSTEN MADISON AND CALEB MCCARRY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2013
TAGS: [CU](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH DISSIDENTS FOLLOWING POTUS VTC

Classified By: COM Michael E Parmly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Immediately following the May 6 VTC with POTUS, COM and other USINT officers sat down with Cuban participants Martha Beatriz Roque (MBR), Berta Soler, and Antunez (Jorge Luis Garcia Perez) to discuss with them further the points they had made to the President. With any nervousness generated by the direct conversation with POTUS dissipated, the three reinforced the points contained in MBR's opening statement (SEPTEL) in much stronger language.

Assistance to the Island

¶2. (C) MBR, supported by both Berta Soler and Antunez, argued again that it is critical that assistance be delivered directly to those on the island who are working for genuine change. MBR said the current system, in which funds are channeled through exile-dominated organizations in Miami is not cost effective and that too few resources are reaching those who need them on the island. She argued that the Miami community has gotten so far out of touch with the day-to-day realities of life in Cuba that its management of the resources is suffering. All three commented that their goal is to bring together large numbers of people to support their activities, whether it is handing out copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or organizing a Damas de Blanco protest in support of political prisoners, but that they cannot do so if they lack the resources to bring together more than a handful of people at one time. All decried the micromanagement of their efforts by those controlling the funds, reminding USINT officers that it is they who are positioned best to know what needs to be done. They emphasized that what is needed now is funds to support operational activities rather than mere subsistence funds.

Remittances

¶3. (C) In a related area, MBR explained further her suggestion that restrictions on remittances be lifted. On the one hand, expanded remittances will enable the purchase of consumer goods and services--most of which are currently unaffordable for the average Cuban--whose availability has been touted recently as a major advance. While the proceeds of such sales go to the regime, the greater purchasing power created by the remittances would force the regime either to provide the goods and services desired or explain why it cannot. More importantly from the standpoint of the opposition, opening the remittances spigot will create a new

source of funds for their own activities. MBR and others in the dissident movement believe very strongly that the Cuban community in the U.S. could do much more to help them through such direct funding than it does now trying to manage appropriated funds from the USG.

Assistance to Prisoners

14. (C) Antunez provided more detail on what could be done in support of the political prisoners. He reiterated the need to generate more international pressure on the regime for their release, but also added some practical requests. He said the prisoners need a broad range of medications and basic hygiene items. Antunez, MBR, and Berta Soler all acknowledged that they had been receiving a steady supply of such material from USINT, but complained that fewer of these items are arriving than in the past, and what is arriving is frequently outdated or sample prescription medication that is of no practical use. They are willing to provide detailed lists of the most suitable items so that future shipments will be more useful. USINT officers pointed out that the regime already is restricting shipments to it through the pouch and may do the same with personal luggage of USINT personnel. Because of this additional pressure, delivery of large quantities of medicine is increasingly difficult, but that the requests for specific items will be forwarded.

Letters to Principals

15. (C) MBR undertook to draft letters to be signed by all three and sent to POTUS with copies to the Secretaries of State and Commerce, and to senior congressional leadership, which will cite the conversation with POTUS and outline formally the proposals they had made. In response, COM agreed to transport the letters to Washington personally on May 9.

16. (C) COMMENT: We have heard these points before, but the conversation with the President brought them into sharper focus. All three insisted that the views expressed were theirs alone, but they track very closely with the messages have been getting from all of the civil society leaders: i.e., we are closest to the reality in Cuba and we should be making the decisions as to how resources are used. End Comment.

PARMLY